

Standards-Based Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development:

Question & Answer Document



A collaborative project of the
Texas Education Agency and the
Statewide Access to the General
Curriculum Network



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Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), require that all students, including those with disabilities, be included in the statewide assessment system. Additionally, because they are included in the statewide assessment system, they must have access to the general education curriculum that is tested using this system. This access may be with or without accommodations and can include alternate assessments. However, due to these requirements, all students must now have enrolled grade level standards-based measurable annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

This Question and Answer document is intended to serve as a resource to provide current information about standards-based IEPs to ensure that the applicable requirements of IDEA 2004 and the ESEA are accurately understood and properly implemented. This document consolidates federal requirements (IDEA 2004 and its regulations) and state guidance regarding standards-based IEP. We encourage you to disseminate this document to a wide range of educators and parents throughout your local education agency (LEA).

Online Training Module

The Statewide Access to the General Curriculum (AGC) Network, in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has developed a free online training titled, "Standards-Based IEPs Goal Development Online Training 2009-2010." This free training (workshop #PD100930-A01) is available through the ESC-20 iLearning website at <https://ilearning.esc20.net/ilearn/en/learner/jsp/login.jsp?site=Root+Site>. The training focuses on the portion of the ARD process related to developing a student's Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) and using the PLAAFP to create enrolled grade level measurable annual academic goals.

This training should take approximately 1 – 1 ½ hours to complete, and upon successful completion a certificate will be created.

The intended audience is general and special educators who are involved in the ARD/IEP process, but other personnel, including parents, are welcome to participate.

Questions and Answers

1. What are standards-based goals?

Standards-based goals are annual, measurable goals aligned to enrolled grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for students in grade K-12 or to the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines for students who are 4 years old.

2. What does aligned to enrolled grade level standard mean?

Annual IEP goals should reflect and link directly to specific grade level TEKS/Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines. The IEP does not need to include all TEKS in a specific subject. The IEP should include only the most critical student expectations within a specific content domain.

3. What are annual goals?

Annual goals are statements that describe what a child with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a twelve month period in the child's special education program. These goals are skills and/or knowledge that will be mastered, not an activity.

4. What is a measurable annual goal?

Measurable goals are defined as statements that contain four critical components: timeframe, conditions, behavior and criterion. A measurable goal includes the behavior or skill that can be measured at periodic intervals against a criterion of success.

5. What are the four critical components of a measurable goal?

- A. **Timeframe** identifies the amount of time in the goal period and is usually specified in the number of weeks or a certain date for completion.
- B. **Conditions** specify the manner in which progress toward the goal occurs. Conditions describe the specific resources that must be present for a child to reach the goal. The condition of the goal should relate to the behavior being measured. For example, a goal relating to reading comprehension may require the use of a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer is the condition.
- C. **Behavior** clearly identifies the performance that is being monitored. It represents an action that can be directly observed and measured.
- D. **Criterion** identifies how much, how often, or to what standard the behavior must occur in order to demonstrate that the goal has been achieved. The goal criterion specifies the amount of growth that is expected.

6. What should the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee consider to ensure that IEP goals are measurable?

A measurable goal meets the following requirements:

- indicates what to do to measure accomplishment of the goal;
- yields the same conclusion if measured by several people;
- allows a calculation of how much progress it represents; and
- can be measured without additional information.

7. What does a measurable goal with the timeframe, conditions, behavior and criterion look like?

The following chart shows the natural flow of a written measurable goal.

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
In 36 instructional weeks	using decoding skills and oral practice within a 3 rd Grade passage	Joseph, a 3 rd grade student, will read	70 words per minute with fewer than 10 errors
By May 15, 2010	given a 4 th grade story prompt and 30 minutes to write	Linda, a 4 th grade student, will write	a three paragraph essay using transition words in sentences and between paragraphs with 5 or fewer errors
By the end of the 2009-2010 school year	given mixed fraction problems using all operations	Jose, a 6 th grade student, will solve	85% of all assigned problems correctly

8. When are ARD committees required to write annual goals that include short-term objectives/benchmarks?

For those students who take alternate assessments aligned with alternate achievement standards (which in Texas is the TAKS-Alternate (TAKS-Alt) test), the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must contain a description of benchmarks/short-term objectives as part of the student's annual goals.

For a student who takes any other state assessment (which in Texas includes TAKS (with or without Accommodations and TAKS- Modified (TAKS-M)), the ARD committee may choose to include benchmarks or short-term objectives as part of the annual goals in order to assist in monitoring the student's progress.

Note: For students who are enrolled in a Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade and do not pass the statewide assessments in the SSI identified subject areas (Grade 5 Reading and Mathematics and Grade 8 Reading and Mathematics), the IEP must include a statement regarding how the student will participate in an accelerated instruction program. For additional information, refer to the Grade Placement Committee Manual on the TEA website for guidelines for an accelerated instruction program at: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/GPCManual.pdf>

9. What are short-term objectives/benchmarks?

Short-term objectives/ benchmarks state the steps to be taken between the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and the attainment of the annual goal. Like the annual goal, short-term objectives must include timeframe, condition(s), behavior and criterion.

There should be at least two objectives for each goal. When considering frequency and duration specify the time that will be used for purposes of accountability, for example, 80% of any 15-minute observation.

10. What does a benchmark/short-term objective with the timeframe, condition(s), behavior and criterion look like?

The following chart shows the natural flow of a written short-term objective. There is one objective for each of the annual goals in the chart on [Question #7](#).

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
By the end of the first six weeks	using decodable texts	Joseph, a 3 rd grade student, will read and pronounce 50 frequently used words	with 10 or fewer errors
In three instructional weeks	with guided practice	Linda, a 4 th grade student, will correctly use transition words to connect simple and compound sentences	with 75% accuracy
By October 1	using prompts that decrease the assistance provided (most-to-least prompting) and through repetitive practice	Jose, a 6 th grade student, will identify 20 fractions that represent more than a whole number on a worksheet in three minutes or less	with 100% accuracy

11. How many annual goals should the student's ARD committee include from the enrolled grade level content area?

IDEA 2004 does not require a specified number of annual goals; rather, the decision should be based solely on the student's disability and its effect in hindering academic progress.

12. Must a student's IEP include both functional and academic goals?

IDEA 2004 states that all students who receive special education services must have measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability. In which specific areas a student needs goals is left to the ARD committee to determine, based on the student's individual needs.

13. In which subject areas do students need enrolled grade level measurable annual goals?

IDEA 2004 does not mandate goals for a specific content area; instead it leaves it to be determined by the student's ARD committee and defined in his/her IEP. The two situations in which a student must have a measurable annual goal are:

- (a) when content is modified for a specific content area/course; and/or
- (b) when a student is removed from a general education setting.

If neither of these is the case, the ARD committee must still include measurable annual goals. Annual goals may:

- (a) be developed from an area of need addressed in the student's PLAAFP that affects the student's ability to make progress and/or access the general education curriculum; and/or
- (b) be developed to clearly define specially designed instruction that the student will receive.

14. How do standards-based IEPs relate to state assessments?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and IDEA regulations require that all students have access to and instruction in enrolled grade-level content. These laws make allowances for appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, as mandated by a student's IEP. However, even alternate assessments are aligned to the same general education curriculum standards (TEKS).

The state assessment, which is required at grades 3-11, includes the following options:

- Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is our general state assessment, which a student may take with or without accommodations.
- TAKS (Accommodated) is our general state assessment with built in formatting accommodations. Also, additional accommodations are allowed on the TAKS (Accommodated) test which are not allowed on the TAKS test. In order to take TAKS (Accommodated), a student must have an ARD-directed accommodation which is not allowable on the TAKS but is allowable on the TAKS (Accommodated) assessment. For further information regarding allowable and non-allowable accommodations on state assessments, see the 2009-2010 Accommodations Manual at: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/accommodations/AccommManual_2009_10.pdf.
- TAKS-Modified (TAKS-M) is an alternate state assessment with modified achievement standards. Students must meet the state developed participation requirement in order to take the TAKS-M. The participation requirements for TAKS-M are at: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksm/participationreq_descriptors.pdf
- TAKS-Alternate (TAKS-Alt) is an alternate state assessment with alternate achievement standards. Students must meet the state developed participation requirement in order to take the TAKS-Alt. The participation requirements for TAKS-Alt are at: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/taksalt/training/participation_requirements_descriptors.pdf

While the ARD committee makes the determination of which state assessment the student will take (based on the student's ARD-directed standards based academic content), the student must meet the participation requirements for the particular state assessment that the ARD committee has chosen. All assessments are based on enrolled grade level TEKS. For more information on student assessment, visit the TEA Student Assessment website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3534>.

15. For a student who takes TAKS-M or TAKS-Alt, does he/she need an academic standards-based IEP goal that corresponds with the tested content area?

Yes, for a student who takes an alternate assessment such as TAKS-M or TAKS-Alt, there must be a corresponding academic standards-based IEP goal for the content area(s) in which the student is taking the alternate assessment.

16. Is it a requirement to write goals for each tested objective on a state assessment?

No. It is an ARD committee decision based on the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP).

17. How can ARD committees use the TEKS to write goals?

The student expectation component of the TEKS is used to provide the framework for annual goal writing by establishing grade level expectations. However, student expectation statements alone are not measurable and should be crafted by ARD committees to reflect a measurable annual goal.

18. Are ARD committees required to include the number of the particular TEKS and/or Student Expectation aligned to each annual goal?

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may elect to include this process in their local policies, procedures and/or operating guidelines.

19. Do students in Pre-Kindergarten-Grade 2 need standards-based IEPs?

Yes, all students should be involved in the enrolled grade level curriculum with aligned IEPs to address individual student needs.

20. Can ARD committees use TAKS-Alt essence statements to write standards based IEP goals?

Yes, each knowledge and skills statement has been summarized into an essence statement that serves as a link to the grade-level TEKS. However, essence statements alone do not contain the four required components of a measurable annual goal and should be crafted by ARD committees to reflect a measurable annual goal. Teachers should use the Curriculum Framework documents to select appropriate prerequisite skills.

TAKS-Alt Resources, including Curriculum Framework Documents, Essence Statements, and Prerequisite Skills can be found at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3638&menu_id3=793.

21. Is it a requirement to write an annual goal for every essence statement for students assessed with TAKS-Alt?

No. It is an ARD committee decision based on the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.

22. Can you use the Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students (FACES) curriculum objectives as annual goals/objectives?

For the academic content area goals (Reading/ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies), FACES would not be appropriate as this is not considered the standard curriculum (TEKS). However, for functional goals, FACES objectives could be utilized.

23. How do you write enrolled grade level goals when a student is not on grade level?

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) has produced a document that illustrates a recommended seven-step process, with accompanying guiding questions, to assist special education teachers and other professionals in developing a standards-based IEP. The Standards-Based Individualized Education Program Examples are available on the following NASDSE webpages:

<http://www.projectforum.org/docs/Standards-BasedIEPExamples.pdf>

<http://www.projectforum.org/docs/SevenStepProcesstoCreatingStandards-basedIEPs.pdf>

24. What is the difference between a modification and an accommodation?

Although there are no legal definitions of the terms modification and accommodation, the following definitions are found on the TEA document, "Descriptors for the Participation Requirements for TAKS-M":

Accommodations- are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of student's disability but do not reduce learning expectations.

Modifications- practices and procedures that change the nature of the task or target skill.

For example, in a Biology class the assignment might require all students to label a diagram of a pig, naming the various systems and explaining their functions. An **accommodation** for a student with a visual impairment might be using large print handouts to complete this assignment. A **modification** for a student who has ARD-directed modifications in Biology might be to use preprinted labels to identify the head, midsection, and legs of the pig.

25. Where can I get additional information regarding implementing an IEP in the least restrictive environment (LRE)?

For additional information regarding this topic, please visit www.esc20.net/agcnetwork.

Glossary

Term	Acronym
Admission, review, and dismissal	ARD
Code of Federal Regulations	CFR
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	ESEA
Free and appropriate public education	FAPE
Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students	FACES
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	IDEA
Individualized education program	IEP
Least restrictive environment	LRE
Local education agency	LEA
National Association of State Directors of Special Education	NASDSE
No Child Left Behind	NCLB
Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance	PLAAFP
Student Success Initiative	SSI
Supplementary aids and services	SAS
Texas Administrative Code	TAC
Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills	TAKS
Texas Education Code	TEC
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills	TEKS

References

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Texas Education Agency (2008). *A Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process (ARD Guide)*. Retrieved January 2008 from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/guidance/ardguide.html>

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Texas Education Agency (2008). *Standards-Based Individualized Education Program (IEP) Guidance*. Retrieved January 2008 from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/guidance/>

Texas Education Agency (2007). *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)*. Retrieved January 2008 from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/teks/index.html>

West Virginia Department of Education (2004). *Connecting West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives to Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development*. Retrieved January 2008 from <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/StandardsBasedIEPs.pdf>

Additional Resources

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Question and Answer Document

English:

<http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/doclibraryroot/SpEd%20Stwd%20AGC%20Left%20Nav/LRE-QA.pdf>

Spanish:

<http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/doclibraryroot/SpEd%20Stwd%20AGC%20Left%20Nav/LRE-QASp.pdf>

The Legal Framework for the Child Centered Process

<http://framework.esc18.net>

Standards-Based IEP Goal Development Online Training

Access information at www.esc20.net/agcnetwork

TEA Special Education

www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/

TEA Student Assessment

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3534>

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>

Texas Pre-K Guidelines

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/pkguidelines/PKG_Final_100808.pdf

Texas Project FIRST

<http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/>